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THOUGHTS ON  
CHILD-SAVING



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TORONTO



# Thoughts on Child-Saving

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" Life's path is rough betimes, the hillside steep ;  
And young feet crave a smoother, easier way,  
While watching demons seek to lead astray  
Disguising evil in love's fair array  
Till guardian angels turn aside and weep."

WARWICK BROS  
& RUTTER &



TORONTO





## CHILD-SAVING.

Toronto, June 7, 1898.

**T**HREE weeks ago it was my privilege to take part in a Conference held in New York, one of the sections of which devoted all its attention to the subject of Neglected and Dependent Children. For the information and encouragement of those who are engaged in child-saving work in Ontario, a few of the ideas and impressions gained at that meeting might be set forth here.

To attend a conference where specialists of any kind are assembled together must always be helpful and stimulating, especially where a person goes prepared to receive instruction, and to take advantage of the opportunities afforded to become acquainted with the newest and best thought.

One of the first impressions that entered the mind in looking upon the delegates who made up the Child-Saving Section was the variety and extent of the interests represented. One felt at once the glow of enthusiasm that seemed to flash from eye to eye, and the spirit of devotion to a great purpose that animated all in the room.

There were present about 200 active workers in all branches of philanthropic effort by which children

were sought to be benefitted. Directors and officers of Children's Aid Societies, Orphanages and Juvenile Institutions, Day Nurseries, Kindergartens, Mission Schools and Homes for crippled or otherwise deformed children.—All were engaged in some benevolent enterprise or other in widely-scattered districts, and had stopped for a few days to meet and compare experiences.

No one present doubted for a moment the need for greater activity in rescuing and protecting children exposed to conditions of neglect and ill-treatment. A child, owing to its helplessness and dependency, is so entirely at the mercy of the adults having charge of it, that if the influences are bad, and loving care and instruction denied, its whole future may be warped and misdirected, to the permanent injury, not only of the child, but of the community in which it finds a place. The protection of every child from unhallowed early association was admitted without question to be the supreme duty of the state toward its future citizens,—and by "the state" we mean, not the central governmental authority, but all members of the body politic who are, or should be, interested in matters pertaining to the public welfare.

But while the desirability of active child-saving work was recognized, the need for care and discrimination was also pointed out. The best work is not that which, recognizing the imperilled condition of the child, snatches it away to a place of safety,—but the directing of all the forces to the removal of

the danger, so that the child may remain in its natural environment, with all the thorns removed from its path. Prevention—that is, the prevention which purifies the home life and restores maternal care and affection, is the very highest form of child-saving work, and the ideal toward which all effort should tend. One gentleman very aptly illustrated this by a story somewhat as follows : The people standing on the shores of a river saw a number of children drowning and eagerly hastened to their rescue. But as fast as they pulled the children from the water others came floating down to the same fate. By and by a man came along, looked on the scene for a few moments, then walked up the banks until he found the people who were throwing the children in. Going home he procured a gun and proceeded to shoot those who were guilty of this cruelty, until very soon he had put a stop to the drowning business. The moral of the story, which in the enunciation was loudly applauded, was, “Get your gun and go after the influences that make for the destruction of happy child life.” What are these influences? Intemperance, ignorance, vice, crime, bad sanitation, lack of cleanliness in habit or home, pauperism.—Against all these enemies of childhood should the Children’s Aid forces combine.

When a child comes before any child-saving organization to have its future position and career decided, there should be the most careful and conscientious enquiry, remembering that an eternal

destiny is at stake. "Red tapeism," said one speaker, "is often denounced by people anxious to get to their destination by short cuts, but should it not sometimes be thought of as devices to avoid mistakes?" Good people, feeling great sympathy with the unfortunate child, are tempted to act hastily and take over the guardianship, when perhaps that was not, after all, the best thing to do. The fact was that too much time and thought could not be given to the investigation of all the circumstances surrounding each case. First, exhaust every effort to regenerate the home and re-establish the parental relationship. If this method fails, seek out some worthy aunt or other relative who may be led by those strong ties of blood and kinship to take up the parental obligation; or this second plan failing, seek for the child as speedily as possibly a permanent location in some childless home where it will receive the affection and training needed to develop character and prepare it for future usefulness.

An important feature of the proceedings was the prominence given to the work of home-finding for dependent children. Institutions, from long custom, have taken a firm hold upon the public mind, and there are many worthy people, who, without reflection, regard the Institution as the proper and natural place for the orphan or the deserted child. But the experience of all who have practical knowledge of Institutions goes to show that this is a poor imitation of home life, and is attended by many and serious



evils. The massing together of children is always hurtful, and the routine which is unavoidable, produces in a short time a dulness and monotony which inevitably tells upon the character of the child. It is also an expensive system, while at the same time, in a large part unnecessary.

The rapid growth of generous and humane instincts during the past half century, and the diffusion of



### **MOTHERLESS !**

information regarding the needs of destitute child-life, has led to many homes being offered for the reception of these children, and the evidence is that in the future, homes will be offered in increasing numbers so that the ideal may ere long be attained—a family home for every homeless child. The advantage of this system is twofold, for it has been found that the

home is as greatly blessed as the child, owing to the feeling of joy and satisfaction that enters into the heart with the knowledge that a good deed is being done.

It does not necessarily follow that the placing of children in family homes will do away entirely with the need of institutions. It was practically agreed that the foster-home plan could only be applied with the best results to healthy, normal children. There will always be those who have been so sinned against as to be entirely unfit to take an ordinary place in society—the feeble minded, the crippled or deformed, the partially blind, the halting of speech, unwinning in manner and ungainly in form, the unattractive and unlovable, and the generally defective—a heterogeneous class whom few could be asked or expected to adopt in the general sense of the term. For these unfortunate children, more to be pitied and compassionated than the orphans, the sheltering care of a well managed institution is desirable, where their special needs could be studied and a special training devised to fit them as well as may be for a place in society. There are scattered through the community more of these handicapped children than the public suppose, and they are not dealt with now because of the difficulty of suitably providing for them ; but if the healthy and attractive children were removed from public institutions to private homes, the difficulty would, in a large measure, be overcome, and many children who are at present cuffed about and allowed

to grow up in the midst of squalor and vice might be properly and comfortably cared for without unduly increasing public expenditure.

For wayward and alleged incorrigible boys who are now sent off in large numbers to correctional institutions for a term of years, it was thought that an elastic system, with a minimum of institutional training and rapid transplantation to foster-homes, would be to their advantage and also to the general benefit of society. Many young lads get into trouble because of excessive energy and buoyancy of spirits. Such energy and buoyancy would find a natural outlet in the free and healthy life of the country, and a vexing social problem would at the same time be partially solved. Boys are apt to be committed to an institution because of homelessness, or an environment and companionship that constantly leads them into mischief. There should be careful discrimination between a lad who is innately vicious and one who has been simply led into wrong-doing by a stronger will than his own. A writer who evidently has a great deal of faith in the spirited boy, says, "modern thought refuses to ascribe incorrigibility to youth. With the right instructor, full of sympathy and skill, energy and tact, the door of the heart of youth will always open, and the young life will burst forth and unfold with its environment in harmonious accord." While this may not always be the result, my experience is that it is the rule, and that no one should engage in child-saving or reform-school work who

does not fully believe in and act upon this principle. The only influence that can save a child, a boy, or a grown person, for that matter, is the loving contact of one soul with another—individual rather than institutional treatment—getting the person sought to be benefitted to feel and believe that his or her welfare is the supreme matter with you, and to disappoint your expectations would be to cause you genuine grief. Children are quick to recognize their friends, and they are quick to resent any mere routine salvation from which the spirit of Christ is absent.

It was pointed out to be most important that all child-saving societies should keep complete particulars of the different children dealt with. This information will often prove invaluable in later years, and the extra trouble in making records will be amply repaid in the knowledge that all the facts are in writing and can be referred to at any time.

The need was frequently emphasized of still further restricting the liberty of feeble-minded girls, and it was shown conclusively from the experience of many, that such girls, so easily led astray, and frequently becoming mothers, were responsible for a large proportion of the illegitimacy that exists in every community.

It is safe to say that many who attended this meeting returned to their homes encouraged to persevere in the good work, and to study carefully that such plans and methods are pursued as will lead to the very best results and to a speedy reduction in the sum total of human misery and misfortune.





There is but one cure for evil—a changed heart.



Love should be the ruling principle in all work of child-protection and rescue.



Sorrow is the great teacher that draws us nearer to those who suffer and are distressed.



Solomon, in describing a good woman, said :—  
“ In her tongue is the law of kindness.”



A little timely prevention may obviate a long life of lawlessness, criminal prosecution and imprisonment.



“ A house is never perfectly furnished for enjoyment unless there is a child in it rising three years old and a kitten rising three weeks.”

"Tears would often be seen in the eyes of his (Froebel's) scholars, when, with his overflowing love of humanity he would speak of the helplessness of children, exposed to all harms by the arbitrary way in which they are managed, but whom God has entrusted to the female sex to be moulded into true men and at the same time into children of God—to be led back consciously to Him from whom they had come forth."



The first Napoleon, with that keen insight into character which distinguished him, once said :—  
"What France needs is good mothers."



The primary object of all who would help poor children should be—not to provide homes, nor food, nor clothing, but to insist upon the people who made them destitute doing so.



We freely give of our time and money to charity, but how slow we are to open our hearts in loving sympathy towards those unfortunates who need our pity far more than our paltry offerings of gold !



#### A SLEEPING CHILD.

" One little wandering arm is thrown  
At random on the counterpane  
And oft the fingers close in haste  
As if the childish owner chased  
The butterfly again."

## NO MOTHER.

An attractive-looking sixteen year-old girl stood in the police court dock charged with stealing a piece of jewelry. After it was shown that she had committed the offence she said amid her tears : " Well, I can't help it. I never had a mother and no one really cared for me." She was an English orphan, apprenticed as a servant when very young and probably never knew what genuine home-life or affection was.



" My father's in the cooler " remarked a little girl when she came to the shelter. " In the cooler," ejaculated the lady in charge. " Yes," she replied : " in the cooler—and that's where he ought to be."



" Oh little feet that such long years  
Must wander on through hopes and fears ;  
Must ache and bleed along the road  
I nearer to the wayside inn  
Where toil shall cease and rest begin  
Am weary, thinking of your load."

—*Longfellow.*



Speaking before the International Prison Congress at Paris in 1895, the Minister of the Interior, M. Leygues, said : " Human nature is at bottom, right, loyal and generous. In the darkest and most ravaged heart there may survive, as in the ruins of a temple, a last lamp, forgotten by the last priest, which burns still for truth and goodness."



" The laughter of these little ones is like a bird's song—it gives you joy and courage to live."

Carlyle was once asked what he thought was woman's work. He replied :—"To seek out some poor lassie and be kind to her."



"A child's eyes ! those clear wells of undefiled thought : what on earth can be more beautiful ! Full of hope, love and curiosity they meet your own : In prayer, how earnest : in joy, how sparkling : in sympathy, how tender ! The man who never tried the companionship of a little child has carelessly passed by one of the greatest pleasures of life, as one passes a rare flower without enjoying its fragrance or knowing its value."—*Hon. Mrs. Norton.*



"To rescue children from bad treatment, bad examples and surroundings, is to fulfil the first of civic duties. Has society the right to punish a feeble being and not to rescue and protect it ? To extend to the wayward child a friendly hand, to console it in its distress, to forget and make it forget its fault is to make a good citizen of one who might become a useless and dangerous being—that is to serve one's country, and better still, to serve humanity at large."—*M. Leygues.*



"In combatting moral maladies, in arresting their advance, in extinguishing their fires, you accomplish work which goes beyond the limits of your action. You help thus to assure the peaceful evolution of progress, for society like organized bodies, needs to prosper and to grow in health as well as in liberty."



## THE SEQUEL OF NEGLECT.

While going down Yonge street one cold winter night about ten o'clock, I came across two small children, a boy and a girl, who were crying bitterly and who soon attracted a sympathetic crowd. They had been begging all evening but with poor success, and they complained with many sobs that they were afraid to go home until they had twenty-five cents. As the children had been frequently seen on the streets and had several times told the same story it was decided, after a little consideration, to take them to a Shelter for the night until the parents could be remonstrated with. The case was tried in the police court, and the parents were warned to take better care of their children in the future. When the mother went to the Shelter for the children, to the astonishment of the onlookers, the children clung to the matron and begged to be let stay. The mother, however, promptly boxed their ears and took them home. This occurrence happened nearly seven years ago. The boy in question is now an inmate of the Reformatory for Boys where he was sent for frequent theft, while the girl was recently sentenced to six months imprisonment in the Mercer Reformatory for Women. Several efforts were made during these years to have the children removed to better surroundings, but the parents made such a strong appeal to the magistrate and protested their affection so loudly that nothing was done. The children from their infancy had never known what it



was to be kindly treated and they certainly never received any instruction calculated to make good citizens of them. The chances of their ever being worthy or respectable citizens are now exceedingly poor, the strong probability being that they will continue to be a source of trouble and expense to the community for the rest of their lives. This is only one of many similar incidents, and surely no stronger plea could be made for the liberal support of Children's Aid work !



## LOVE UNLOCKS THE HEART.

“The love of a little child awakens a depth of love, by the softness of love's caresses and the ‘thrilling sweetness of wandering baby fingers.’ Those parents who open the closed doors of heart and home to one of God's homeless little ones will look back on their lives and know they were much in need of just this love link. Remember, we are all fathers and mothers in the truest, highest meaning of those words. The love principle, the father-mother

love, is within each heart, whether externalized or not,—is a full orbed seed, only waiting for circumstances to bring it out, and this ‘circumstance’ is within your reach, by opening the door of your love and the door of your material home to the child who is knocking and asking for its own.”



